A Brief

INQUIRY

Bagshaw, Edward

INTO THE

Grounds and Reasons,

Whereupon the

INFALLIBILITY

OF THE

POPE and CHURCH

OF

ROME

Is said to be Founded.

By Edward Bagshaw, St. of Ch. Ch. Oxon.

[illegible]

LONDON,

[illegible]

BX 1763
.B14
Rare Bk

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARIES
CHICAGO, ILL.

Engr'g
Coll

1257415

To the Right Honourable the

Earl of *ANGLESEY*,

one of his Majesties most Honourable Privy Councell.

Right Honourable,

I Believe your Lordship in your *Search* and Survey of the Mysteries of Providence, with which you entertain your Privacy, have often with great amazement considered, how many strange and admirable Effects, do daily proceed from small and ignoble Causes; for not only *Thunder*, *Rain*, *Lightning*, and other common *Phænomena*, which do astonish the World, have their whole Make and Composition, from a seemingly casuall and undesigned Concourse, of Light and Fleeting Clouds; but likewise largest Rivers are fed by secret and concealed Springs; and the World it self, if traced and resolved into its most visible Originall, is framed of *Atomes*; and the *Earth*, which is vulgarly conceived to be the Basis and Center of the Universe, *is*, as God himself is pleased

139154

to expreſs it, *hang upon Nothing*; and yet, by that Almighty Hand which fixed it, it is made ſtable and firm enough, to endure unmoved all that Hurry and Variety of Mutation, wherewith the rolling Motion of the Heavens, do daily threaten it.

What wonder your Lordſhips Contemplation, hath begot in viewing the *Works of Nature*, I doubt not but hath been continued, when you deſcended from them to behold the *Works of Art*; eſpecially the Civil Policies of States and Kingdomes; in which, as your Lordſhip hath been alwayes moſt knowingly converſant, ſo you can from the deepeſt and beſt grounded Experience evince, that though Earthly Empires, (I mean ſuch as are not guided by Chriſtian and truly-Religious Principles) have an Outward Semblance of a Subſtantiall and Laſting Greatneſs, yet the Baſis which doth ſupport the whole Politicall Frame, is but ſome State-trick or other, ſome little Expedients found out to amuſe the Vulgar, whoſe Folly muſt be pleaſed, or elſe they will never be governed.

But how far the Wit of man, can advance it ſelf, to imitate the Works of God, even thoſe of a Creative Power, the making *Something out of Nothing*, is in no Policy more diſcernible, than in that deep and wiſe contrivance of ſubtle men, the *Papacy*; the Body of which hath a pleaſing Aſpect, and is ſet out with a very ſpecious Gloſs; all the Parts do ſeem extreamly well-proportioned; there is a ſtrange Linking and Confederacy of all its Principles; and to the Eye of a Superficiall Beholder, it preſents nothing but a beautifull and comely Outſide. But if any be ſo curious, as to look beyond its Varniſh and firſt Appearance; ſhould we pry into the Foundation of this

Goodly

Goodly Structure, we ſhall find it, like the *Iſland of Delos*, alwayes *Floating*; or rather, like the Earth, to *hang upon nothing*; For the *Pope's Infallibility*, or the *Churches Authority*, or ſome ſuch fond *Chimera*, is all the Baſis which doth under-prop this Building. Things that are ſo confidently aſſerted, and yet upon triall ſo ſhamefully begged, that were not the world, in *Gods juſt Fudgement*, given over to a vicious and Lazy Credulity, all that is built upon ſuch thin and empty Fallacies would not ſubſiſt one moment; but for the preſent, the Arts of planting a devout Ignorance, have ſo farre prevailed, that the world doth hugge its Bondage; and men finding a great deal of eaſe in being quietly deceived, they are content to *worſhip the Beaſt*, and are angry that any ſhould fright them from embracing a Religion, which hath made the way to Heaven ſo very plaine and eaſie, that, whatſoever becomes of the *Seeing*, they that are *Blind* enough ſhall be ſure never to miſſe of it.

It is now, *My Lord*, ſome ſcores of Yeares ſince we of this Nation have by Scripture-Light diſcovered all the Frauds and Cheats of this *Miſtery of Iniquity*; and yet it ſeems all mens eyes are not opened, for ſome of late have pleaded for *Popery*, and for that which is the chief Bulwark of it, the *Popes Authority*, with as good a grace (if Railing and needleſſe Rhetorick may deſerve that name) as if they had never been anſwered. One in his great heat of *zeal*, or ſomething worth, doth tell us, *That Queſtions about the Popes Authority over Biſhops, of Biſhops over Prieſts, and of Prieſts over the Laity, are of no ſmall moment. But he that goes about to deſtroy this Hierarchy, aimeth at nothing leſſe then an Utter overthrow of Religion.* Which are but Ruſhworth Dial. 1.

Bellar. *Praef.*

Bellarmines words in Engliſh, and, if inſtead of the word *Religion* they had ſaid *Popery*, they had ſpoke nothing but the Truth, ſince that is bottomed onely in the *Popes Authority*. Which a late nameleſſe Author ſo farre cryes up, that he ventures to ſpeake words, which no ſober man would owne. *In my Fudgement*, ſaith he, *Chriſt our Lord hath no leſſe ſhowne his Divinity and Power, in the Pope, than in himſelf.* And again, *All things conſidered I may truly ſay that Chriſt in the Pope and Church, is more miraculous than in his own Perſon.* And yet farther, as if thoſe expreſſions were too modeſt Blaſphemy, and not bareſaced enough, he goes on, *The firſt great Fundamentall of Chriſtian Religion, which is the Truth and Divinity of Chriſt, had it not been for the Pope, had failed long agoe in the world.* Whereupon enlarging himſelfe, he addes *whence I may truly ſay, that* Chriſt is the Popes God, *for if the Pope had not been, and proved ſo reſolute an Aſſertour, Chriſt had not been taken for any ſuch perſon as he is believed this day.* And ſo in a boaſte concludes, *This I will boldly ſay and am aſſured of, that if the* Pope *be not an* Unerring Guide *in affaires of Religion, all is loſt. For a man once rid of the Controll of his Authority, may as eaſily deride and as ſolidly confute the* Incarnation, as the ſprinkling of Holy-water, *nor could the reaſon of the world confute them.* While I relate ſuch kind of Paſſages as theſe which I tremble to mention, I hope your Lordſhip will pardon my zeal, if I complaine a little, that Treatiſes of a farre more innocent Nature, are ſharply cenſured, while theſe open Impieties doe ſcape unpuniſhed; as if our Lawes were keen onely againſt the Aſſerters of *Chriſtian Liberty*, but had no edge at all againſt the

Fiat Lux—dedicated to the Counteſs of *Arundell*, and twice Printed.

Pag. 375, 377, &c.

Broachers

Broachers of *Antichriſtian Blaſphemy.*

Since then the *Pope's Infallibility*, is that *Name of Blaſphemy*, which makes all its Patrons ſo bold and Irreligious; ſince that is *the Bottomleſſe Pit*, out of which all this *Deadly ſmoke* doth iſſue: I have here, according to your Lordſhips commands, endeavoured to ſhow the Vanity and Ridiculouſneſſe, as well as Impiety of that opinion. In which if I have not anſwered your Lordſhips expectation, as to the exactneſſe of my ſtile and ſtrict manner of my Reaſoning, I ſhall not wonder: ſince no Induſtry of mine can be ſufficient to ſatisfie your Lordſhips accurate and unequalled ability in Judging: But if I have ſhowed my diligence, and left no Argument unanſwered, how plainly and inelegantly ſoever, I hope then your Lordſhip will let my willingneſſe to obey, compound for the failings in my Obedience; ſince, if the Enemy be killed, it is all one, as to the truth of the Victory, whether it was done by a *Rough Stone*, or by a *Poliſhed Sword*; nor was *David's* conqueſt the leſſe eſteemed, becauſe he vanquiſhed *Goliah* onely with a *ſling*.

And now, *My Lord*, before I conclude, I ſhould crave leave to tell the world, how *Good*, as well as how *Great*, you are. I ſhould borrow ſo much Language from *Common Fame*, and the *Generall Voice* as to declare that for Wiſdome, to Direct; for Eloquence, to Expreſſe; for Diligence, to Execute; very few equall, and none exceed your Lordſhip. But ſince what is truth in it ſelf, and would be Juſtice in others, in me, becauſe of my Relation, may be eſteemed flattery; I ſhall turne my *Praiſes* of, into *Prayers* for you, that your Lordſhip may be alwayes fixed upon the *Rocke of Ages*, and in

all

all your walkings acknowledg that God, who onely is *Infallible*; That Chriſtianity may ever ſteere your actions, and all your other Politicall and Morall excellencies may ſtill vail and doe Homage unto a knowing Piety; that with your truly Religious and Excellent Lady, together with your moſt Hopefull and Virtuous Children, you may be long preſerved a *Good* and *Great Example*, is and ſhall be the conſtant Prayer of

My Lord,

Your Lordſhips moſt Obliged
and moſt Obedient Ser-
vant and Chaplain.

Edward Bagſhawe.

Drury-Lane
April 19th. 1662.

THE

The Preface.

THere are none who allow themſelves any liberty of Enquiry, ſo little skilled in the Controverſies and Diſputes between the Papiſts and Us, but muſt needs perceive, that when they are driven out of all the Subterfuges and little Policies (which they call Diſtinctions) *by which they labour to defend their Errours, then their laſt reſort is, to the* Infallibility of their Church; *which as they handle it, is a* Σοφὸν χάρμακον, *a Plaiſter large and broad enough, though not to cure, yet to palliate and hide their noiſome and diſeaſed Doctrines. And therefore unleſs we can take from them this Refuge alſo, it will be to as little purpoſe to combate their other Tenets, how falſe and erroneous ſoever, as it was for* Hercules *in the Fable, to wreſtle with* Anteus; *who as often as he was thrown down upon his Mother the Earth, roſe up again with new and redoubled vigour: So till we are able by plain force of Argument, to convince the Papiſts of their folly, in believing that* πρῶτα ψεῦδος, *their* Mother, *the* Churches Infallibility,

no industry can be so quick in cutting off and destroying their Errours, as that pregnant and fruitfull womb will be, in conceiving and bringing them forth again. As they tell us, that young Vipers when they are assaulted, run into their Mothers mouth, and from thence seek shelter in the poisonous womb that bare them; so all those Prodigies, rather than Opinions of Transubstantiation, Supererogation, Image-Adoration, *and the like, when they are pursued home, and pressed beyond the strength and support of their own proper Principles, then to defend themselves, they take Sanctuary in* Infallibility, *and under the protection of that, they lye, though not concealed from the eye, yet safe from the edge of their opposers. For to instance in the vast use of it, what if all the senses we have, and the Apostle too, do assure us that the* Bread *in the* Lords Supper, *even after Consecration, remains true and reall* Bread *still, yet if that* Church, *whose judgement is supposed to be* Infallible, *tells us there is no such matter, but that under that Form, whatever we think, there is contained our Lord* Christ *both in his Divine and Humane Nature, we must then in spite of all contradiction, either believe her, or else vindicate our selves from so unreasonable and so absurd an opinion, by disproving her* Infallibility.

Leaving therefore other parts of the Romish Religion, which are either bold additions to the Word of God, or else so gross falsifications of it, that they deserve not a particular confutation, I have here endeavoured to set upon that Man of sin, *where his strength lyes, since by our Saviours example,* to break the Serpents head, *is not only the most ready way to dispatch him, but the most safe way too to prevent any infection by his venome.*

In prosecution of this Design, that I might not out of too much eagerness and heat mistake my Adversary, I took this Method.

1. *I laboured fully to inform my self of the* Church of Romes *Doctrine, especially in those points, wherein we as* Protestants *do differ from them. And this I did, not by studying the Collections of others, or by adhering to some one Author of their Party, whose Writings they are not bound universally to own, but by diligent perusing the* Canons *of their most magnified* Councels, *particularly that of* Trent, *which I read only in such Editions, as are approved and attested by themselves.*

2. *Since the* Popes Infallibility, *how tamely soever our Modern Papists swallow it, was anciently a great Dispute amongst them, and in the Schools among their learned men is not yet decided: some attributing it to the* Pope *(which seems to have been the judgement of the* Junto *at* Trent*) others preferring a* Councell, *of which opinion were the two Councels of* Basil *and* Constance, *as appears in their Decrees yet extant. Hereupon I carefully perused Cardinall* Bellarmine *upon this Subject, who is the Popes Principall, and most avowed, I will adde, and most learned Champion. And because I think he hath spoke fully the sense of the* Court of Rome, *and left nothing unsaid which might justifie his Cause, I made it my business in the following Treatise to answer his Arguments.*

3. *Though they inferre it from different Principles, yet since both Papists and Protestants do agree in this Conclusion, that* the Scripture is the undoubted Word of God, *I have from that Armory fetched all my weapons, by which I fight against this Monster of* Infallibility: *for since* Bellarmines *best plea for it is from some few Texts, by him miserably wrested and mistaken, I thought it my duty to take this* sword of the Spirit *out of that* Goliahs *hand, and not only smite off his head with it, but likewise use it my self throughout my whole Discourse. For though the Papists are so bold as to*

deny the Scriptures to be a Sufficient *Rule, yet for so much as there is of them, they dare not deny them to be Infallible: and therefore*

Lastly, Whatever Testimonies I might have alleadged, either in behalf of the Scriptures Sufficiency and Divine Authority, or against the perpetuall Infallibility *of any man, or number of men whatever, (of which kind of Citations I have collected many, and observed more in the ancient Writers, especially before* Constantines *time) yet I purposely omitted them, because* 1. *In Questions, wherein the Right of any thing is controverted, to call in Witnesses is altogether impertinent.* 2. *No Authority of man ought to prevail, unless it hath the Authority of God, and the consent of mankind,* i.e. *Scripture or Right Reason to back it.* 3. *Many Writers of our own, as Mounsieur* Daillee, Chillingworth, *the Lord* Falkland, *the Lord* Digby, *now Earl of* Bristow, *&c. have already shewed the vanity and uselesness of such Allegations: and because it is possible that the example of the last Honourable Person I named, may be urged against me, since his present practice doth contradict his former principles; I will only adde this, that since his Book is not yet answered by himself, I hope he thinks it unanswerable, and will not long continue in communion with that Church, whose Foundations he hath so well overthrown.* 4. *This way of writing by Quotations, makes every Controversie uncertain, dilatory, and endless: for as the possessed person said to the* Exorcists, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? *so may the common Reader say of Authorities and Fathers,* Scripture *I know, and* Reason *I know, but who are ye? for any farther than they speak according to the Dictates of the two former, these latter must not be heard, much less believed or followed.*

That this little Treatise, thus curtailed of all Authorities,

and

and deplumed of those Sentences from Fathers (with which others do not think they stuff, but rather adorn their Writings) is like to be little read, and less esteemed by the men of a contrary perswasion, I easily foresee; but yet the Question is so very usefull, that I could not omit to handle it. For

1. *If it shall appear, that the* Church and Pope of Rome *are not* Infallible, *then I hope all those who have unwarily embraced their Errours, upon the account of their unerring Authority, will be induced to shake off their laziness, and address themselves strictly to enquire into the Grounds of what they Believe; and according to the advice of the Apostle* Paul (*who was undoubtedly* Infallible *in that direction*) Prove all things, and *then* hold fast that which is good. *The greatest Truth, while it is untried, may for ought we know be an Errour; and all that while if we entertain it, we fall upon our Religion onely by chance; and serve God, as the* Samaritans *did, for which our Saviour blames them,* we know not why.

2. *If the* Pope and Church of Rome *be not* Infallible *in their Judgment about Religious matters, then it follows, that they ought not to impose upon the Judgment of others; there being nothing more unreasonable then this, that they should* Lord it over the Faith, *or,* Conscientious Perswasion *of other men, who are not certain but they may Erre and be deceived themselves.*

This last Consideration, how far it may be improved, to moderate the great Fiercenesse and Rigor of too many among our selves (who in things of so poore, so triviall, so needlesse and so unmanly a nature, will have their will to be a Law) I mention only, it being too sad a Theme to insist long upon. But if Religion, which is in it selfe the firmest tye; if the Law of Christ, which is a Law of Love; cannot make us agree and live together as Brethren, yet let feare of the

common Enemy, prevent our ſeparation. When Abraham *and* Lot *fell out about their Paſtures (and I wiſh much of our Church-quarells now were not of the ſame nature) the ſpirit of God remarks upon it,* the Canaanits and the Perizzites were then in the Land. *Hereby intimating, that it was a moſt unſeaſonable time for them to diſagree and to divide from each other in, when they were ſurrounded in the midſt of Enemies. This paſſage perfectly agrees with our Caſe, and on the very ſame motive beſpeakes a mutuall Reconcilement; for certainly* the Canaanites are in the Land, *the* Philiſtines are, *if not* upon, *yet* Among *us, who watch our Halting, and hate* Conformiſts *and* Non-conformiſts (*if theſe muſt be once more the Unhappy Termes to diſtinguiſh us*) *both alike; the one they hate for going ſo farre from, the other, for not comming neerer to them. If God in juſt Judgment upon our unchriſtian Animoſities, ſhould make us a Prey to thoſe Incircumciſed* Philiſtines, Polyphemus *courteſie to* Uliſſes, *of devouring him laſt, would be the greateſt favour that he can expect, whoever he be that is now moſt eager in denying his weake, but yet Chriſtian Brother, that Liberty which he thinks Chriſt hath purchaſed, and none but* Antichriſt *will ſeeke utterly to bereave us of. Should we ever fall into the Papiſts hands again I cannot expect they ſhould uſe us more mildly, then their predeceſſours did* Samſon, i. e. *put out our eyes, and make us grind in their Mills, Or as they afterwards ſerved the* Iſraelites, *take away our Weapons of Warre, our* Scripture, *and the beſt, if not the onely Interpreter of it,* Enlightned Reaſon, *and ſo leave us Naked and Defenceleſſe, to the Aſſaults of* Ignorance *firſt, and if that will not prevaile, to the Fury of a Mercileſſe* Inquiſition. *Which laſt, will be found the ſtrongeſt and moſt forcible Engine, rather then Argument, by which they defend their* Infallibillity.

But

But how ill an opinion ſoever I have both of the Papiſts Religion, and of the unchriſtian wayes they take to propagate it, yet farre be it from me to wiſh, that amongſt us they may ſuffer the ſame hard meaſure, which I know by their principles, they are alwayes ready to inflict. For ſo much doe I deſire their Converſion (which can never be ſincere unleſſe it be voluntary and unconſtrained) and ſo little feare their Power of ſeducing (ſince their greateſt ſtrength lies in the Ignorance of their followers, rather then in the cunning of their Guides) that I heartily wiſh all Penall Lawes againſt them were utterly taken away: For I never yet ſaw any Argument that could clearly evince, why any ſort of men, who would profeſſe a peaceable ſubjection unto the Civill Government, might not in all their Civill Rights, be protected by it.

I muſt confeſs there are two things, which do much difference the caſe of the Papiſts, from that of any other Religious Sect this day in the World, and which renders the toleration of them very unſafe, if not unwarrantable. One is, their depending upon, and owning of a forreign Power, and that ſuch a Power too, which according to the Opinion of their Teachers, can when he pleaſeth diſpenſe with them for, and releaſe them from their moſt ſacred Engagements, ſo that a State can have no ſecurity, but that whenever they have opportunity, they will endeavour a Change; and their preſent peaceableneſs may juſtly be attributed meerly to their want of ſtrength: which Bellarmine *is not aſhamed to ſay, was the ſole cauſe why the Primitive Chriſtians were content to ſuffer without Reſiſtance: from which Poſition what can follow, but that it concerns the wiſdome and policy of every State, to keep thoſe under, whom as to temporall Subjection, it cannot confide in. But could our* Papiſts *in* England *give ſufficient evidence of their hearty diſowning ſuch an irreligious*

Lib. 5. de Pontif. Rom. c. 7. Quod ſi Chriſtiani non depoſuerunt Neronem *& ſimiles, id fuit quia deerant vires temporales, nam alioqui jure id poterant facere, &c.*

ous Tenet, yet there is another thing practiſed by them, which makes it highly queſtionable whether a Kingdome profeſſing Chriſtianity ought to tolerate them in, and that is their Worſhip of Images, *which is a ſinne ſo contrary to the expreſs letter of the divine Law, and ſo repugnant to the common ſenſe and reaſon of all ſober men, that God puniſhed it ſeverely even in the Heathen* Caldeans, *as well as in his own people the Jews. But bating theſe two indefenſible Crimes, rather than Errours, their other opinions of* Merit, Purgatory, Tranſubſtantiation, *&c. may for ought I ſee be charitably born with, ſince in themſelves they create no prejudice to the publick Peace, which even Chriſtian Magiſtrates, ſo far as they are Magiſtrates, ought principally, if not ſolely, to provide for.*

Jer. 50. 38.

If any think that ſuch Indulgence, like warm Aire, will ripen theſe monſtrous Births too faſt, and prove the ready way to encreaſe Popery, they are utterly ignorant either how that Religion firſt began, or by what Arts it is ſtill upheld. For till the world was aſleepe in ſenſuality, and blinded with Ignorance, the Enemy could not ſow theſe Tares; and had they not afterwards maintained by force, what they gained by fraud, thoſe Tares could never have proſpered into ſo large an Harveſt. In oppoſition, therefore to that conſpiracy of Ignorance and Malice, which goes to compound the Roman Religion I ſhall not ſcruple to ſay, that if his Majeſty *(whom God, I doubt not, hath deſigned for ſome ſuch great and generous worke, as now I mention) be pleaſed ſtill to continue to countenance the free Preaching and Reading of the Scripture, and to diſalow the impoſing of any thing, which either is contrary to or beſides it; It will then be as impoſſible for Popery to prevail, as for duſt to reſiſt the Wind, or for Airy Clouds to Eclipſe the Sun. The Errors of Popery, for want of Divine Warrant, have in them ſuch a Fundamentall*

mentall and Inherent weakneſſe, that unleſſe they are upheld by a Coercive power, they will ſinke and fall of themſelves; as thinne and emty vapours, if they have but roome enough in the Aire, will diſperſe themſelves, without the help of any wind to ſcatter them. To endeavour therefore the weakning of Popery, by any thing which looks like Perſecution, doth indeed give it ſtrength and Reputation, asif it had reaſon on its ſide and therefore ſtood in need of force to ſuppreſſe it. And beſides it onely fills the Church with Hypocrites *inſteed of* Converts; *who by mingling with, and masking themſelves under the Name of Proteſtants, doe what they can ſecretly to diſpirit and undermine our Religion, the power of which they never felt, ſince they were onely frighted to the Embracing of it.*

But perhaps I need not plead ſo zealouſly for the not perſecuting of Popery, *when too many of our unwary Gentry begin already to be taken with the outward Pompe of it; and ſome that yet profeſſe themſelves to be of our Church, and thoſe of good Note too, are not afraid to plead for ſomething more then its* Toleration. *Since by telling us in Print, that the* Pope is not Anti-chriſt; *that* Papiſts are not Idolaters; *nay by affirming, that* All are Schiſmatickes, who upon that ſcore do refuſe Communion with them. *They (not onely blemiſh the Virtue and Piety of our firſt Reformers) who all built upon that Foundation, but likewiſe ſhow how willing they are upon any Termes how wretched and unworthy ſoever, to returne into* Egypt, *and bring us to our* Bricke *and* Bondage *again. If this be not the intent of ſome I cannot imagine what meanes the crying up of that great* Diana *of the Papiſts,* the Churches Authority, *and making that the* ſole Interpreter of Scripture. *The Preaching up*

Mr *Thorndike.* Juſt Weights and Meaſures.

Dr Gunning upon Mat. 9. the Lent Fast. —— Eliz. 5. Mr Thorndike. ut supra.

of Lent, *and other Politicall Fish-dayes, as* Religious Fasts, *and* of Apostolicall Institution, *quite contrary both to expresse Scripture and an* Act of Parliament. *The insinuating that* we may Lawfully pray for the Dead, *and likwise* expect some benefit by their Prayers, *which in time may easily be improved to our Praying unto them. These with some other Opinions of the like nature, so farre degenerating from our* Primitive Protestancy, *doe shew that if the Age is willing to be deceived, there are not wanting Learned men, who are willing enough to deceive them.*

The designe therefore of this small Treatise, is not only to depose the Pope *from his usurped Title of* Infallibility, *but to keep all persons else,* whether Churches, *or* Church Rulers, *from taking the Chaire and succeeding into his room. For since our Lord* Christ *hath given every Believer, Reason to judge with, and a Rule to judge by: since over and above he hath promised* his spirit to all that ask it, *which serves to assist the one, and to explain the other; he hath thereby appointed every man, in matters of Faith and Godlinesse, to be a Judge for himself, though not of another. And he who useth those meanes which our Saviour hath left, and seekes to him in them, may Infallibly be assured, that though in some things he may Erre, as a man, yet he shall never finally miscarry. Whereas he that leanes upon a Church, of what denomination soever, cannot be sure that he shall not be deceived: since any number of men, are as fallible in their Judgement as one (especially when they are all sworne, as in the Papacy, to uphold the Authority, and to defend the dictates of one) This consideration alone will I hope prevaile with all Impartiall and disinteressed per-*

sons

ſons to take the ſafeſt ſide, and with David, *to chuſe* to fall into the hands of God, *whoſe word duely ſearched into never deceived any, rather then* to fall into the hands of men, *who being Blind themſelves, do firſt take care to Blind their Followers and then* lead them into a Ditch.

Drury-Lane,
Aprill 16. 1662.

Edward Bagſhaw.

THE GREAT QUESTION ABOUT The Infallibility of the Pope AND Church of *Rome*.

Queſt.

Whether there be any ſufficient Ground from Scripture or Reaſon, to believe the Pope and Church of Rome *to be Infallible?*

FOr the better underſtanding, and clearer ſtating of this Great Queſtion, I will premiſe theſe three things;

1. By the *Pope*, I mean the *Biſhop of Rome*, not in his *Perſonall capacity*, as he is *a Man* (for ſo, the prodigious and monſtrous Lives of many of their Popes, which are

Multi Pontifices fuerunt minus probi. Bell. *Præfat.*

obvious in Story, cannot but force them to acknowledge, that he is liable to Errour) but in his *Politicall*, or, which is all one, his *Ecclesiasticall* capacity, as he is the pretended *Head of the Church*, and vested with all those Immunities and Priviledges, which his Favourers suppose to be due unto the *Universall Bishop*.

2. By *the Church of Rome*, I mean, not the diffused and scattered Body of the Papists, but, according to their own Sense, how Absurd and Insignificant soever, the *Bishops* and *Doctours of their Church*, assembled together in a *Councell*; where, they may be supposed to meet, with the greatest Advantage and Opportunity, for the Disquisition and Search of Truth.

3. By *Infallible*, I mean, to have a certain, fixed, and unerring Judgement in Religious matters; which things alone do properly belong to the determination and cognizance of a *Church*, as it is a *Church*. And, in this sense of the Question, thus explained, in as great a Latitude as any Papist can possibly understand it in, I deny the *Pope*, whether considered as apart from, or conjoyned with, as a part of, a *Councell*, to be *Infallible*.

For the proof of which Assertion, though I might find out great variety of Arguments, from the express and direct contradictions which have been among the Popes themselves, some reversing that which others have ratified; and others establishing that, which their Predecessors under the severest Penalties have forbid. Yet since the proper and direct way of Arguing, lyes in shewing the weakness and insufficiency of those Arguments, which are brought in defence of the Popes Infallibility, that is the Method which I purpose altogether to insist on. For since this great and so much admired *Diana* of the *Papists*, is no *Αυτόπτης*, *i. e.* a thing to be discerned by its own Light,

Light, and to be credited meerly for it ſelf; as the teſtimony of the Spirit is, when it bears witneſs unto the truth of Scripture; and beſides, it being generally denied by all the Proteſtants, who make the Errours of the Church of *Rome*, the ground of their ſeparation from them, hence it cannot be expected, that we ſhould tamely give up our Aſſent to believe this *Infallibility*, unleſs there be ſome evident and concluding Reaſons to enforce it from us. If therefore it ſhall appear, that whatever *Bellarmine* (and when I mention him, I mean the ſtrength of the whole Popiſh Party) hath ſaid, is altogether impertinent and unconcluding, indeed nothing elſe but a plain begging the thing in Queſtion; my Deduction from thence will be *Infallible*, viz. that we have as yet no Reaſon to believe the *Popes Infallibility*.

To clear up this, the beſt way will be to take a ſhort view, of thoſe Arguments which *Bellarmine* alleadgeth, in his Books *De Pontifice Romano*; and they are briefly theſe three.

1. Some Texts of Scripture in the New Teſtament.
2. Some Analogicall Inferences out of the Old.
3. Some Abſurdities and Inconveniences which would follow in the Church of God, ſhould we not allow the *Pope* and *Church of Rome to be Infallible.*

1. The Texts of Scripture which *Bellarmine*, and all Writers ſince him, do urge to prove the *Popes Infallibility* by, are theſe three, *Mat.*16.18,19. *Luk.*22.31,32. *Joh.* 21.15,17. From which they draw theſe three Concluſions. 1. That in thoſe fore-mentioned places, our Saviour did confer upon *Peter* ſome ſpeciall Priviledges, above and beyond the reſt of the Apoſtles; and they were 1. *Supremacy*, in *Matthew*. 2. *Infallibility* in *Luke*, 3. *Univerſall Epiſcopacy* in *John*. 2. They Aſſume, that

that whatever was bestowed upon *Peter*, was not confined unto his Person, but was promised likewise unto his Successours: since what was granted unto *Peter*, was given for the good of the Church, and therefore ought not to die with him. 3. They take for granted, that the *Pope* was *Peter*'s Successour, both in the *Bishoprick* of *Rome*, and also in all his other *Priviledges*; and for the last, they alleadge nothing but the credit of that, which they call, *Apostolicall Tradition*.

Whether or no these Deductions are cleare in the Texts, or violently haled and wrested from them; with so much impudent and shameless Sophistry, as a wise and disinteressed Person, would blush to be guilty of, will best appeare by examining the places themselves; and if, when they are put upon the Racke, they can be forced to confesse so much, as *Bellarmine*, and the *Popes* Parasites conclude from them; I shall then consent to dethrone *Scripture* from its plainnesse and Perspicuity; but till then I must take leave to thinke, that that Church doth very wisely, which makes *Ignorance* and *Implicite Faith*, *the Mother of Devotion*: for nothing lesse then an over-awed and Religious stupidity, would make any man submit unto such Impossible and farre fetched interpretations.

1. The place in *Mat.*16.18, 19. runs thus, *And Jesus answered and said unto him*, i. e. to *Peter*, *Blessed art thou Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee, but my Father which is in Heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock will I build my Church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it: And I will give unto thee the Keyes of the Kingdome of Heaven; and, whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.* Which place they thus inter-

pret; 1. By the *Rock*, upon which Christ saith he *will build his Church*, is meant the Person of *Peter*; and the Churche's being built upon him, signifies, say they, that the care and government of it was committed to him; and thus they understand likewise his *Having of the Keyes*. 2. By the power of *Binding and Looſing*; they understand, the power of commanding and punishing; of making and repealing Laws; with all such things as belong to a Soveraign and Legislative Power. 3. They tell us, that whatever *Peter* had here, was likewise granted to the *Pope*, who is his Successour; and therefore he being the *Rock*, and the *Foundation* of the *Church*, cannot be *tossed about with every wind of Doctrine*, and therefore is *Infallible*. But I answer,

1. Upon supposition that *Peter* here was constituted, as they call him, *Head and Prince of the Apostles*; yet, how would this Personall Priviledge, any more belong to the *Bishop of Rome* (if he were *Peter*'s Successour) than what our Saviour elsewhere saith to *Peter*, *Why didst thou doubt, O thou of little faith!* doth note the Pope's uncertainty and instability in Believing? Or, what our Saviour presently after speaks, *Get thee behind me Satan!* doth signifie, that every *Pope* is an *Incarnate Devil*; or, to take the mildest Interpretation, an *Adversary* to Christ, and to the good of mankind? For what Reason can be assigned, why the *Pope* may not as well succeed in *Peter*'s Personall Defects, as into his Priviledges? since the Scripture is utterly silent, either that he had, or that he was to have a Successour in either? But Mat. 14. 31.

2. I deny the Supposition, upon which all this *Babel* is built; that our Saviour did confer any Preeminence of Power and Authority upon *Peter*, above the rest of the Apostles; because

1. These words, *Upon this Rock will I build my Church*, cannot without blasphemy, be affirmed of the Person of *Peter*; who himself was built upon the *Rock*, *Christ*; and was not the *Foundation*, but only a *Workman* at the Building. Indeed in the Figurative Description of *New Jerusalem*, which *John* makes in his Vision, he compares it to a City, which had *twelve Foundations, upon which were written the Names of the twelve Apostles.* So that if the *Papists* will needs call *Peter* a *Foundation*, I hope they will take in the rest of the Apostles, to be sharers with him in that Title. But since the whole Description in *John*, City and all, is only Figurative and Metaphoricall, the *Foundation* there mentioned, must be like the City; *i. e.* so-called, not in a Reall, but only Metaphoricall Acception. For to speak properly, as *Paul* doth, *No other Foundation can any man lay, than what is already laid, and that is*, that *Jesus is the Christ*. And therefore when we are said *to be built upon the Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles*; the meaning is not, that we are built upon their Persons, but upon their Doctrine; the summe of which, is contained in *Peter*'s confession; upon *which Rock*, our Saviour hath so built his Church, that *the Gates* or *Powers* of *Hell*, however they may rage, and strive to ruine it; yet they shall never be able finally to prevail against it; but Christ will have a Church, in some place or other, unto the end of the world.

Rev. 21. 14.

Rev. 21.

1 Cor. 3. 11.

Eph. 2.

2. If *Peter* was the *Rock*, so as all Christians, even the Apostles themselves, were to depend upon his guidance; what a wretched and tottering condition would the Church have been in, when this *Rock*, so soon after was shaken, and almost removed out of his place? For within some few minutes, he is rebuked by our Saviour, in no milder language than this, *Get thee behind me Satan!* The Story of

of his denying, and that with Oaths, his Master, is too notorious to be palliated, and too sad to be insisted on: Even after our Saviours *Resurrection*, when they pretend this promise of *Infallibility* was inseparably annexed to him, we find him unresolved in that part of his Commission, which concerned his *preaching the Gospel unto the Gentiles*, and therefore had the assistance of a particular *Vision*, more fully to inform him of it; and afterwards at *Antioch*, we read that he was of so inconstant and unequall a carriage, in that great point of *Christian Liberty*, complying herein more than he ought, with the Jewish rigour and austerity, that *Paul* was forced *openly to reprove him* for it, and so prevent the contagion of his ill example. So that if he, who in the *Court of Rome*'s stile, is called *Prince of the Apostles*, in matters of so great moment, was thus subject to Errour and Fallibility, I wonder with what face, the *Pope*, upon the account of being *Peter*'s Successour, can plead any exemption.

Act. 10.

Gal. 2.

3. These words, *I will give unto thee the Keyes of the Kingdome of Heaven*, do not denote any peculiar power, that *Peter* had over the rest of the Apostles; for then, how came it to pass afterwards, that there were so many, and so fierce contentions amongst them, *Who should be greatest?* Which our Saviour, at two severall times, silences, not, by commanding them to obey *Peter*, as their *Chief*, but by utter prohibiting any desire of Soveraignty: If they answer us, as *Bellarmine* doth, that the Apostles did not clearly understand, that *Peter* was to be *Supream Head*, till after our Saviour's Resurrection, (which by the way, is nothing else but a bold playing with sacred Scripture) Then I demand farther, when there was a new Apostle to be chosen into the room of *Judas*, why did not *Peter*, by his sole Authority, design him?

Act. 1.

him? or at least when the multitude of Disciples (for so we read that all of them were concerned in the choice) *had appointed two*, why did they not present them both unto *Peter*, that he might choose one, rather than suffer the matter to be decided by *Lot*: sure had *Peter* had any paramount and extraordinary Power, and withall a peculiar *infallible spirit*, he could not have better exerted it, than in that emergency. For the *Head of the Church*, in so concerning a business, first to permit *all the multitude*, to have a voice in choosing an Apostle, (for if our modern Arguments are good, he might justly fear, that they being for the greatest part unlearned, would choose one like themselves, and so prejudice the reputation of Apostolicall Authority) and afterwards to leave the matter unto the uncertain casualty of a Lot, whereas the choice seemed properly to belong to *Peter*'s Jurisdiction; this argues either that his Power, or his care of the Church, was very little; of which last, I hope the Papists do not doubt; and therefore must needs deny the former. For what is it else but *to tempt God*, to have recourse unto casting of *Lots*, when a way of choice, more prudent and Infallible, by referring the business to *Peter*'s single Decision, was opened for them. But it seemes the Apostles understood nothing of *Peter*'s *Supremacy*, either then, or afterwards, when they went to choose *Deacons*, which by all the *Apostles*, *Peter* not being so much as particularly mentioned, was committed to the *Multitude*; and after the choice, *Imposition of hands* was performed, not by *Peter* alone, but as the Text expressely saies, by *all the Apostles*. Will they tell us, that this was a thing below him, and that it did not become *Peter*'s Authority, to interesse himself in a matter of so petty concernment? This plea is taken from them, because we read that *the Twelve*, and among them sure *Peter* was

Act. 6.

one,

one, did not think it below them: and beſides, it will appeare, a ſtrange kind of conceated and uſeleſſe Authority, which they aſcribe to *Peter*; which in maters, neither of the greateſt, ſuch as was the choice of an *Apoſtle*; nor of the leaſt moment, ſuch as was the choice of a *Deacon*, would ever ſo particularly exert it ſelf, that we might once take notice of his Prerogative. But what kind of Equality *Peter* ſtood in to the reſt of the *Apoſtles*, he ſhewed, Act. 8. in ſubmitting to be ſent with *John*, unto *Samaria*; to finiſh that worke of the Goſpell, which *Philip* had begun there; for ſure our Saviours Argument is *Infallible*, that Joh 15. *He who is ſent, is not greater then he who ſends him.* And it would have been a ſtrange boldneſſe (I believe the *Pope* would call it by a worſe name in his *Cardinalls*) ſhould the *Apoſtles* have thus preſumed to ſend their *Prince*, had he indeed been ſo conſtituted over them. Yet further, when there was a Queſtion ſtarted about the uſe of *Jewiſh Ceremonies*, and a *Synod* convened about it, why did not *Peter* Act. 15. then *Preſide* as chiefe? Why did he ſuffer the buſineſſe to bediſputed, after he had declared his own Judgment? Why doth *James*, who ſpoke after him, give him no more Honourable ſtile, then plaine *Simeon*? and ſeemes himſelf, in ſaying *My ſentence is*, to give the whole ſolution of the Query, as alſo the Forme of the Future Decree, without taking any notice of *Peter*'s deciſion? Whence comes it, that after a ſtrict Debate, the reſult was in the Councell, *It pleaſed the Apoſtles, and Elders with the whole Church*; and the ſuperſcription of the Letter runs, *The Apoſtles and Elders and Brethren*; and the decree, *It ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt, and to us*; without any mention of *Peter* at all, whoſe Supremacy and Infallibility, ought not to have been thus ſilently paſſed over, that the Churches afterwards, might know whether to

to have recourse for satisfaction of their scruples. How comes it to passe, that we hear no Newes of *Peter* after, but the story is continued wholy about *Paul* as if the *Primacy* had been transferred to him? sure the Holy Penman, who mentions so many of *Paul's* travells, that were of farre lesse moment, would not have omitted *Peter's* Journey to *Rome*, his sitting *Bishop* there for eighteen yeares, and fixing the *Succession*, and *Infallibility* to boot, upon that *See*, had he understood any thing of it. Afterwards when *Paul* meets *Peter* at *Antioch*, Why did he not vaile to him, but Irreverently stand upon his Termes, and *Openly reprove* him? Lastly, For Instances are infinite in this kind, why doth that blessed Apostle *Peter* himself, disclaime any such kind of Jurisdiction, stiling himself συμπρεσβύτερος, a *Fellow-Elder*, and utterly forbiding any pretentions of *Lordship* and *Soveraignty* even over the *Flocks* they fed, much more over their *Fellow Ministers*. Certainly none of these things, can consist with that grant, which *Bellarmine* fondly supposeth, was here made to *Peter*, and therefore we may justly conclude, that the words have another Interpretation, which is plainly this: Our Saviour asking his Disciples, what men thought of him, and whom they took him to be; after he had heard the various opinions of others, he continues to aske them theirs; whereupon *Peter*, in the name of the rest, replies *thou art the Christ the Son of God*, which being the Article, that then was oppugned, our Saviour pronounces him *Blessed* for it; not, as if other Believers were not equally blessed, and did not obtain this Faith by Revelation too (for so the Apostle *Paul* saith expressely, that *none can call Jesus Lord*, i. e. *Christ, but by the Holy Spirit*) but those words are spoken exclusively, as to any outward meanes, whereby he

Gal. 2.

1 Pet. 5.

1 Cor. 12.

he might attain that knowledge. For that no lesse power, than the Imediate action of the Spirit of God, can make a man to Believe on Christ, is not onely evident from the nature of the thing, which exceeds all created ability; but likewise from those perpetuall contradictions and doubtings, which Beleivers themselves have, before the Spirit of God hath explained and solved them. The promise therefore which our Saviour makes to *Peter*, of *giving him the Keyes*; &c. concerned all the Apostles, since they were Believers and Disciples as well as he; and so our Saviour enlarges it after his Resurrection, in that generall Commission, *Whose sins soever you retain they are retained* i. e. By your Preaching, whom you doe declare to be under the power of sin, if they *Repent not and Believe the Gospell*, their *sins are retained*. i. e. *Bound* and tied fast to them, for God will never pardon such; but others that embrace the Gospell, are *remitted* i. e. loosed and absolved. So that the result of all is this: From this place, cannot be inferred either. 1. That *Peter is that Rocke, upon which Christ will build his Church*; but rather, *Christ* himself confessed by *Peter*. Or 2. That *Peter* here had any Preeminence of *Power*, *Authority* and *Infallibility*, above the rest of the Apostles; he receiving this Promise onely, as a Prolocutor of the Apostles, in whose names he spoke, and they being afterwards joyned all equally in the same Commission. Much lesse can it be deduced, 3. That the *Pope*, who is not once mentioned, was *Peter*'s Successour, or hath the least pretension to claime any thing from him, unlesse it be his *Errors* and *Fallibility*.

2. The second place of Scripture, which is brought for the Patronage of *Peters* first, and then of the *Popes Infallibility*; is that which if they had searched the whole Scripure, they could not have found one that doth more directly

make

make against it: The place is *Luc.* 22. 31, 32. *Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as Wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy Faith faile not; and when thou art converted strengthen thy Brethren.* Here, though by a most miserable instance, we find how fraile and fallible *Peter* was; yet *Bellarmine* draws from hence two priviledges, that were conferred upon *Peter.* 1. That *Peter* might never fall from the Faith, how much soever he was tempted of the Divell. 2. That none of his Successors should ever teach any thing contrary to the truth. The First of these I grant; and acknowledge that it was by virtue of this Prayer of our Saviours, that *Peter* recovered his station again, after so great a shaking, but withall I adde, that this was no peculiar Priviledge to *Peter*, but in common to all the rest, as is more cleare in *Joh.* 17. *v.* 9. and the Reason why *Peter* was particularly spoken to, was because our Saviour foresaw he should more foully miscarry: and therefore stood in need of this Cordiall to relieve him. But the second, is so little to be gathered from the Text *viz*, that the *Pope*, as *Peter*'s Successor should never teach false Doctrine, that it would be an extream vanity in me, to go about to confute it: Onely one fetch of *Bellarmines* is not to be omitted; when we object, that if this place be to be understood of *Peter*'s *Successors*, then it must presuppose, that all the *Popes* (who will needs intrude into that Title) must first deny *Christ*, and after that be *converted*, before they can *strengthen their Brethren*, or be confirmed in the Faith themselves. To this *Bellarmine* replies, that ἐπιστρέψας doth not signifie, *Peters* being *turned* from sin; but his *turning himself* to the *weak Brethren*, to discourse with them, which is a piece of so merry Sophistry, that it only serves to show the wretched boldnesse of Partiall

and

and self-designing men, when they make use of Scripture to shore up and to underprop their ill got greatnesse; the plainest places then shall not escape their perverse and irregular fancies; as this, wherein there is a gracious Promise made of *Peters* Recovery and Conversion, is made to signifie just nothing, but the Impiety of those men, who dare thus abuse it.

3. The Third and last place, which is urged in this Controverse, and most insisted on, though to as little, or if possible, lesse purpose, than either of the former; is *Joh.* 21. 15, 17. Where our Saviour repeats no lesse then three times. *Peter feed my Lambes*; and *feed my sheepe*. *Bellarmines* Comment upon these words, is very admirable. 1. By *Feed*, which in the Scripture dialect signifies only to *Teach*, and compassionatly to care for; he understands to Rule and Governe, as Prince. because the word ποιμαινειν is sometimes so rendered. 2. By *Lambes* and *Sheepe*, he sayes are understood Christians of all sorts and sizes. *Lambes* signifying the *weak in Faith*; and *Sheep* the *Apostles* and *Teachers*, which are to other Christians, as *Sheep* are to their *Lambes*, i. e. the bringers of them forth in the Faith of Christ; over whom *Peter* is here constituted *Universall Bishop*, and none who belong to Christ, as one of his *sheep*, but must by virtue of this Commission, be obedient unto *Peters* Rule and Direction. Had *Bellarmine* stopped here and streined this Scripture no farther, he might have had some commendation for his Wit, though very little for his Honesty, but when he goes on, and Infers, 3. That whatever here is granted to *Peter*, was entended likewise for his Successour; and 4. That the Bishop of *Rome* did succeed him: I cannot but observe how ill an Interpreter of Scripture, Prejudice and Prepossession is; for who that reads this place without looking upon it, through

the Spectacles of the *Popes Infallibility*, can make any other sense of it, than this; that *Peter* having denyed our Saviour *thrice*, is here *thrice* minded of his Duty, to humble him under the sense of his former miscarriage, and to direct him, that he could not better demonstrate his Love to Christ, then by showing a care over his little ones; which our Saviour had before enjoyned him, when he said *Thou being converted, confirme thy Brethren*; which is all one with what is here commanded him, *Feed my Lambs and Sheep*: i. e. Teach, Instruct, Reprove, exhort them, and therein performe all the Acts of a Faithfull Minister; as *Paul* to the *Elders* of the *Church* of *Ephesus*; Act. 20. 28. bids them *to Feed the Church of God*; and *Peter* to the *Elders* of the Believing Jewes, in that very place, where he forbids them all manner of Soveraignty and Coercive Jurisdiction, commands them to *Feed the Flock of God*, 1 Per. 5. 2 which was among them. And what the word *Feed* signifies, God himself hath already explained, when he promises by his Prophet, that he would give unto his People, *Pastours according to his own heart, who should Feed his* Jer. 3. 13. *people, with knowledge and with understanding*. So that the word cannot be rendred to *Rule and Governe with Force and Authority*, and *making all men submit, unto his Infallible Dictates*; for this is that which God condemnes in the Shepheards of *Israel*; *who ruled over them with* Ezek. 33. 4. *severity, and with Rigour, and Cruelty*; but with all gentlenesse and condescension to accommodate themselves unto the weak and infirme state of their Flockes; Is. 40. 11. as God describes himself. *He shall Feed his Flocke like a Shepheard, he shall gather the Lambes with his Arme, and* Ezek. 34. 15. 16 *shall gently lead those that are with Young*. And again *I will Feed my Flock, and cause them to lye down; I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen*

that

that which was sicke. This is the part of a good Shepheard, and this is the summe of what here is enjoyned *Peter.*

After this plain and clear vindication of these Scriptures, had I a mind to make my self, and my Reader sport; I could not find a better Subject, than by enlarging and descanting upon those excellent Arguments, that *Bellarmine* alleadges to prove, 1. That *Peter* was *Bishop of Rome*; and 2. That the *Pope* did succeed him, not only into that *Bishoprick*, but likewise into all his other more than Apostolicall Priviledges. The first he proves, *from the dignity of that See, which*, saves he, *could no otherwise arise, but because* Peter *was a Primate there:* but who doth not see, that the dignity of it, might easily arise from other causes, as particularly from this, because it was the chief seat of the *Roman Empire*; which is the Reason assigned, why the *Bishop* of *Constantinople* was to have the second place, because he was Bishop of *New-Rome.* 2. He proves it, because *Peter died and was buried there, as*, saith he, *is apparent from his Sepulchre, yet to be seen.* As if it was not as easie for the Popes to make specious Tombs, for men who never died in *Rome*, as to *Canonize*, and make prayers to *Saints*, who, if it is to be feared, have no place in Heaven. His Reasons to defend the *Pope's* succession unto *Peter*, are of the same nature; as 1. *Because* Peter *ought to have a Successour; there being*, saith he, *as much reason for an Universall Bishop now, as then.* Which I easily grant, and return it thus, But there was no Reason for an *Universall Bishop* then; for then sure the holy men, whose business it was to write all things absolutely necessary unto faith, and godliness, would not have omitted a matter so very important, unto the peace and unity of Christians; and therefore we may safely conclude, there was no such *Universall Bishop*; but

Concil. Constantinop. Can. 3.

admitting it were so, how will it appear, that the *Bishop of Rome*, more than any other *Bishop*, was to be his Successour? *Yes*, saith *Bellarmine*; 2. *None ever did yet pretend to be* Peter's *Successour, but only the Bishop of Rome, and therefore undoubtedly he was the man*; Which is all one, as if an Usurper, who had gained a Crown by force, and destroyed all the lawfull Heirs, should say, none doth now pretend to the Crown, but my self, and therefore undoubtedly I have a true Title. I believe this is the first case, wherein a confident and peremptory claim, was ever thought to give a rightfull possession.

But I will no longer fight with a shadow, or pursue an Enemy, who hath a Bog for his retreat; for so I account all Arguments taken from *unwritten Tradition*; which is *Bellarmine*'s last refuge: for what can be more unreasonable, than to alleadge *old Stories*, (which serve only to the advantage of the teller, and therefore may justly be suspected to be forged by him) and to use them as Motives, to perswade us unto the belief of that, which in Reason is ridiculous; and in Scripture, the most authentick and allowed Tradition, is not so much as once mentioned. The summe thereof of what I have to say is this; 1. It doth not appear, in any of the fore-mentioned places, that *Peter* had any peculiar Priviledge of *Infallibility*, or *Authority* granted to him, above the rest of the Apostles. 2. It doth much less appear that ever he was at *Rome*, or sate as *Bishop* there. 3. Upon supposition that the two first could be as clearly proved, as it is clear they cannot, yet that any of *Peter*'s personall Priviledges, should be communicated to another, who will needs usurp his Name, and stile himself his Successour, can as little be maintained, as that his *power of Miracles*, his *gift of Tongues*, &c. should be continued, which the Pope as

yet

yet doth not pretend to. I conclude therefore, that *Bellarmine*'s first Plea from Scripture, is so far from Demonstration, that it is scarce tolerable Sophistry, and so much in Answer to his first Argument.

Secondly, The second Argument in defence of *the Popes Infallibility*, is taken from the *Analogy and Resemblance, that ought to be between the Jewish and the Christian Church. For in the Jewish Church*, saith *Bellarmine*, *there was an High-Priest, which was Infallible; unto whom they were commanded to have recourse, in all difficult Causes, and to abide by his Determination; as appears* Deut. 17. 8,14. *And therefore in the Christian Church, there being the same, if not greater necessity, because of the extent of it, it follows that there must likewise be some visible Infallible Judge, for the ending of Controversies, which will daily arise among Christians; and this can be no other than the Bishop of Rome.* *Arg.* 2. Bellar. de sanct. Pontif. l. 4, 1

To this Argument from Analogy I answer;

1. That the similitude and resemblance between the Jewish and the Christian Church, doth not consist in having the same outward Oeconomy, and Forms of Administration; as in a *visible High-Priest*, with other Rites and Ordinances answerable to such a Visibility; but in the spirituall and inward performance, of what heretofore was materially and outwardly represented. So that the Jewish Sacrifices did not import, that they should alwayes be continued, but, as the Apostle tells us, they were to last only, untill that great Sacrifice was offered, of which all the others were only faint and weak Preludiums. The like is declared concerning their *meats* and *drinks*, their *washings*, and *bodily purifications*, with other *carnall and outside Ordinances*, which were only *imposed, untill the time of Reformation*, and after that, were not, that we read of, Heb 9.10. Heb. 9.18.

to be continued with new names, and under another form, but utterly to be abolished, *because of their weakness and unprofitableness.* The like the Apostle observes concerning the *High Priest*, into whose room our Saviour succeeded, who is called *a Priest for ever*, after another order than that of *Aaron*; even *after the order of Melchisedeck*; who can supply all defects of his Church, without appointing a visible Head in his place, by his own immediate Energy, *since he lives for ever, to make intercession for them.* So that if any upon earth now, will pretend to bear the same place in the Christian Church, that *Aaron* did in the Jewish, he must be able to shew the same divine warrant; for as the Apostle observes, *No man takes this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron; so also Christ did not glorify himself, to be an High Priest, but he that said to him thou art my Son this day I have begotten thee.* Let then the Pope of *Rome*, but deale above-board, and show us some such plaine place of Scripture, which doth Authorize his plea, and then let them be *Anathema* that will not submit unto his Dictates; but since this is not so much as once offered, we cannot be faithfull to the Honour and Prerogative of our *Great* and *only High Priest*, if we doe not looke upon this pretended *Vicar* of his, as a bold and unwarrantable Intruder. But

Heb. 7. 18.

Heb. 7. 25.

Heb. 5. 4, 5.

2. It doth not appear, that the High Priest among the Jews, was at all Infallible, nor doth the place alleadged evince so much; for there *Moses* speaks not of Religious, but of civil causes; and commands that the Parties litigant, should *do according to the sentence of the Law, which they shall teach thee*; so that the High Priests were not to pronounce according to Tradition, or private fancy, but according to the Law of God, which whoso consulted might speak infallibly; not as if the High Priest meerly by

Deut. 17. 11.

vertue

vertue of his Office and Place, was more priviledged from Errour, than the common Jew, but because God did give his Law for an Infallible Rule, and in all parts that concerned his own Worship, had made it so plain and particular, that unless they would, they could not mistake it. But for want of taking heed to it, we find that in *David's* time, both himself and all the Priests did Erre, in conceiving that the *Arke* might be carried *upon a Cart*, which was expressely commanded to be carried *upon the Priests shoulders*; whereupon when God smote *Uzzah*, *David* acknowledged that a breach was made upon them, because *they sought him not in the due order*. Besides in the generall Apostacy of the people, which the Prophets so sadly complain of, and so much enveigh against, we have no reason to imagine, that the High Priest continued stedfast in Religion; since in all probability, *Uriah* the *Priest*, whom *Ahaz* employed in building an *Idolatrous Altar*, was the *Chief Priest* at that time, and not only a *partaker* in, but a promoter of that wicked King's abominations. We read likewise, that none were more fierce against *Jeremy*, and other of Gods Prophets, than the Priests; and to put the matter out of Dispute, we have it plainly told us, that there was for many ages, none in that Church that could Infallibly guid them; so the Psalmist, *We see not our Signs, there is no more any Prophets, neither is among us any that knoweth how long.* And in *Ezra* we find, that the *Tirshatha*, or Governour, as some think *Nehemiah*, commanded *that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a Priest with Urim and Thummim*; who was to enquire of the Lord in difficult cases, according to the command given to *Joshua*, that he should consult with *Eleazar* the Priest, who was to *ask counsell for him, according to the judgement of Urim*: which in *Ezra's* time,

Numb. 4.

2 Chron 15.13

2 Reg 16. 10.

Psal. 74. 9.

Ezra 2. 63.

Numb. 25. 21.

was

was utterly ceased, and we do not read that ever it revived again. Just as much *Infallibility* therefore, as the *High Priest* and *Sanhedrim* had, in our Saviours time, when they put him to death; I am content to allow unto the *Pope*, and a *Councell* of his calling, and more than that, this Argument from Analogy will not amount to. For if they were so fatally deceived, in so important and evident a truth, who had, as *Bellarmine* supposeth, a clear promise of being Infallibly assisted; how much more liable to Errour is the *Bishop of Rome*, who hath no promise nor pretence of Plea, but only an usurped and unjust possession. Since then, 1. the High Priest of the Jewes, was only a Type of Christ, and did not figure any other person in the Christian Church, who was to bear a Resemblance to him: And 2. since he was not Infallible, but in the most concerning business that ever happened, and that was the acknowledgement of the *Messiah*, most miserably mistaken: And lastly, since the whole Argument doth no more concern the Infallibility of the *Bishop of Rome*, than of any other Bishop whatever; nothing can be concluded from hence, but that the Prophesie of the Apostle, that God *would give some up unto strong delusions, that they should believe a lie*, by mens taking pains to urge such kind of empty and frivolous Reasonings as these, is abundantly fulfilled. And so much in Answer to the second Argument.

2 Thes. 2 10.

The third and last Argument, to prove the *Pope's Infallibility*, is taken *from those Inconveniences, which would follow in the Church of Christ, were there not some unerring Judge appointed, to determine Controversies. For since our Saviour foretold, that there would be false Christs and false Prophets; since the Apostles tell us, that Heresies and Errours would be vented; it would argue that our Saviour had*

had small care of his Church, should he have left it without a Guide, unto whom all might have recourse: As if a Master of a Ship, should be at pains to rigge up a Vessell, and put it to Sea, if he did not appoint a Pilot that might steer it through the Waves, and secure it from the Rocks, he might justly be taxed as very improvident. So saith *Bellarmine*, *it will lay a great Imputation upon our Saviours Wisedome, if, amongst so many prodigious Errours, which, like Waves, are ready to overwhelm the Truth, he should not have provided some such known and visible Pilot, who can guide the Ship of the Church, through all storms, and preserve it safe, from those Rocks and Shelves, by striking upon which, it is otherwise liable to miscarry. Some one therefore is requisite to be the Judge of Controversies, which by Confession of all Ages, is no other but the* Bishop *of* Rome.

I have enlarged this Argument, and put some kind of flourish upon it, because this is indeed the Papists *Achilleum*; and upon all turns, the supposed Inconveniences, which will follow, if we admit not of their groundless conceits, are alleadged to authorize their Unscripturall Institutions. Therefore I answer,

1. That Arguments drawn from Inconveniences, are so liable to mistake and Errour, and, for the most part, do so much savour of Passion and Interest, as well as shortsightedness, in the Arguer; that, in all Disputes, concerning the Truth of any thing, they are of very little weight. It is no hard matter, to fasten some seeming Absurdities, upon the most plain and clearly revealed Truth, as we know the *Socinians* do upon the Doctrine of the *Trinity*. The Jewes heretofore conceived our Saviour to be a *Blasphemer*, and thought it would be very prejudiciall to their state, to suffer him to live; and afterwards both *Jewes* and *Romanes* did agree, in striving to

suppress his Doctrine, because of some Politicall Inconveniences, which they imagined would follow the spreading of it. Yet all the while, our Saviour was really *the Son of God*, and his Doctrine, *the Power of God unto Salvation for all Believers*. So that unless the Papists can clear to us, by some better Motives, than any they have yet produced, that their Bishop is Infallible, the Inconveniences, which they suppose will follow our denying it, ought not to sway with us.

2. Among Persons, who own the Scriptures to be the Word of God, certainly it is much more rationall to argue, such a thing, (as for example the *Popes Infallibility*) is not once mentioned there, and therefore undoubtedly was never divinely appointed; than to say it is divinely appointed, because otherwise it would be very Inconvenient. It would have been much more convenient, if all Mankind had been as Infallible, as the *Pope* is presumed to be; if we had all retained our Innocence, and been exempted from Possibility of offending; one would think, this might have made more for the Honour of God, and the Peace of Mankind, than our present erring and sinning Condition. But we must not measure Gods Appointments, or the Reall Being of things, by our own Rules of Convenience; nor affirm a Thing to be so, because we conceive it would be very Convenient, if it were so. It is therefore but lost labour, for the Popish Writers, in a great deal of Plausible Language, to declare and set out the great Convenience of *Infallibility*, when they should first prove to us the Truth and the Existence of it. We may easily fancy, many things to be very Advantageous and Useful to the World, which yet never, either were, or will be: And amongst these goodly *Chimera's*, wherewith fond persons please themselves, for ought I yet

see,

ſee, this Dream of *Infallibility* may claime a Chiefe place.

3. Thoſe Terrible ſtories and Tragicall outcries, about the danger of *Heriſies*, for the ſuppreſſion of which, this expedient, of having ſome one *Viſible Unerring Judge*, muſt be found out; they are, for the moſt part, as Mr. *Hales* well obſerves, but *ſo many Theologicall Scarecrowes, ſet up to fright us from the Diſquiſition and ſearch of Truth.* I know very well, that to teach *Hereſie* i. e. any *Falſe* and *Unchriſtian Doctrine*, is a very great ſin; but yet, to prevent this, we muſt not in all haſte run into a greater: For to ſet up a *viſible God upon Earth* (according to the Court of Romes ſtile) to *cry up a man*, that is like our ſelves, to *be Infallible*; and then *to fall down* and *worſhip him*; to bring him for an offering, not thoſe worthleſſe Creatures, as Sheep and Oxen (which onely were required of Old) but to Sacrifice our ſoules, to bind over our *Reaſons* and *Underſtandings* unto his *Oracular Dictates*; this is ſo dull, ſo ſtupid an *Idolatry*, that we may wonder, any learned man would ever goe about to defend it, had not *the God of this world blinded their eyes*; and did they not *by this Craft*, as that Ancient Father *Demetrius* the *Silver-Smith* ſubtilty argued, *get their Livings*, and divide the ſpoiles of the deluded world, by this groſſe and Palpable Cozenage.

Supremum in Terris Numen & Dominus Deus noſter Papa.

Laſtly, In anſwer to all their Allegations from *Fathers* and *Authority*, I need ſay no more than this, that as, though all the world did conſent to believe a *Lie* (as that *the Sun was really no bigger then it ſeemes to be*, which was the opinion of *Epicurus*) yet this Conſpiracy would never make a *Lie* to be *Truth*; ſo, upon ſuppoſition, that all Antiquity did acknowledge this prerogative of the Biſhop of *Rome*, yet could we not from thence

inferre the Justice and the Legallity of it; because the most that such Testimonies amount to, is meerly this, to show us, not what really was, but what they conceived to be True: I need not therefore be much concerned in examining *Bellarmine*'s Quotations. But yet that I may doe Justice to the Christians of former Ages, and vindicate them from being so Unwise, as the Pope's Champions would make us believe they were; I must affirme, that this Doctrine, is so farre from being owned by any of them, for many Centuries, that we have upon Record, many pregnant Instances, which doe evince that they did not so much as Dreame of it. To draw up which, I shall select onely two or three famous Cases, which *Bellarmine* is pleased to take no Notice of.

Euseb. *lib.* 5. c. 23, 24, 25.

1. The first Instance shall be from that doughty dispute which was raised about the yeare 160. concerning the day when *Easter* was to be kept, the Churches of *Asia* kept *Easter*-day precisely upon the 14th of March; at which time the *Jewes* did solemnize their *Passeover*; but the *Westerne Churches*, after many meetings to settle this weighty Controversie, did agree that the day of our Saviours Resurrection, should be celebrated onely upon the *Lords Day*. The *Asian Bishops*, notwithstanding this Decree, did persist in their former custome, in which they were defended by *Polycrates*, who alleaged that *Philip the Evangelist*, *John the Apostle* and many others, did transmit that Traditionall Observance to them. Upon this, *Victor* the Bishop of *Rome*, in great heat (ἀνέτρα θερμανθείς, saith my Author) did take upon him to excommunicate all the *Churches* of *Asia*, but being sharply writ against for it, and stiffely opposed in it, he was forced to revoke his sentence. Which story might afford

ἐπὶ τῇ κυριακῇ.

Socrat. *lib.* 6.

us

in very many Observations, as 1. That *Superstition* and Needlesse *Observation of Dayes.* 2. That *Imposition* and *Abridging of Christian Liberty in things Indifferent.* 3. That the *Bishop* of *Rome*'s *Usurpation and exceeding the Bounds of his proper Jurisdiction*, did begin to worke very early. But I wave these, and onely note, that had the *Churches* of *Asia* then thought the *Bishop of Rome* to be *Infallible*, they would not so peremptorily, in so small a thing as the Retaining of an Old Custome, have refused to submit unto his Judgment.

2. My second Instance shall be from that Controversie, which for many yeares was very eagerly managed; *viz. Whether such as had received Baptisme from Heretickes, upon their Returne to the Church, should be Baptized again or not?* *Cyprian* and all the *African Bishops* maintained the Necessity of *Re-baptizing*; and in their Letter to *Stephen* the Bishop of *Rome*, after they had at large given the Reasons of their Opinion, they conclude, *So much Dearest Brother, have we enformed you of, not doubting because of the Truth of your* Religion, *but such things will please you, which are both Religious and True. But yet we know, that some are very unwilling to lay down any Opinion, which they have once tooke up; but preserving that mutuall agreement which ought to be amongst Brethren, they retain the Customes which they have once been used to. In which matter, we neither Force nor give a Law to any; since in the ordering of the Churches, every Governour hath absolute power of his own will, as being to give unto God a-lone a Reason of his Actings.* From which passage written by *Cyprian* and all the *Bishops of Africk* (who met together in a Councell for that purpose) it sufficiently appeares. 1. That they did not understand any thing of

Cyprian. Epist. 72. Edit. Fam.

Præpositus.

the *Bishop of Rome's Infallibility*, since they profess to refrain their own Judgement, without subscribing to his.

2. That in the outward Regimen and Government of the Church, every Bishop hath equall Power, and ought not Authoritatively, to prescribe and impose Laws upon another. As the same *Cyprian*, in another Letter, *These things*, saith he, *according to my weak Ability, have I writ, not Imposing upon or Pre-judging any; as if it were not lawfull for every Bishop to do as he thinks fit, since he hath free Power of his own Will.* And afterwards, when *Stephen* had declared his Judgement, that he *would have none baptized again, whatever Heresie they came from; but that the ancient Custome should be preserved, whereby such Converts were admitted into Church Communion, meerly by laying on of Hands*, *Cyprian*, in stead of yeelding to his Determination, doth taxe his Letter of *Pride*, *Folly*, and *Impertinence*; and, in Answer to those words of his, wherein *Stephen* commanded that nothing should be varied, from the accustomed Tradition; *Whence*, saith he, *was that Tradition? Did it descend from the Authority of our Lord and his Gospel? Did it come from the Commands and Epistles of the Apostles? For God testifies in his Commands, both to Joshua and others, that* those things only should be done which were written. *And our Lord Christ, when he sent his Apostles into the World, commands them* to Baptize, and to Teach all Nations, that they might observe and do all things, which he had Commanded. *If therefore any such Custome,* (meaning that of *Stephen's*) *be contained, either in the Gospels, or in the Epistles and Acts of the Apostles, then let such an Holy and Divine Tradition be observed. But what Obstinacy, what Presumption is it, to prefer* Humane Tradition, *before a Divine Appointment? What Folly is it not to consider, that God is angry,*

Ibid. Ep. 73.

Ibid. Ep. 74.

Inter cætera vel superba, vel ad rem non pertinentia, vel sibi ipsi contraria, quæ improvidè atq; imperitè scripsit.

gry, as often as Humane Tradition doth lessen and discountenance Divine Precepts; as he testifies by the Prophet Isay? And our Saviour likewise, in his Gospel, rebuking and chiding the Pharisees, Ye reject the Commands of God, that ye may keep your own Tradition. Of which words, the Apostle Paul being mindfull, he likewise adviseth and instructeth us, saying, If any man teach otherwise, and rests not in the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in his Doctrine, he is puffed up, knowing nothing; from such turn aside. Neither ought Custome, which hath privily crept in amongst some, to hinder Truth from prevailing. For Custome, without Truth; is nothing else but the Antiquity of Errour. And it ariseth only from Pride and Presumption, that one is apt to defend his own Practices, how False and erroneous soever, rather than consent to that, which is True and Right in another. For which reason, the Apostle Paul writing to Timothy, adviseth a Bishop not to be Contentious, but Meek and Apt to Teach. But he is Apt to Teach, who is Gentle, and endued with Patience to Learn: for a Bishop ought not only to Teach, but to Learn; since he Teacheth best, who continually grows and profits by Learning. Which the Apostle Paul likewise declares, when he admonisheth, That if any thing be revealed to another which sits by, the First should hold his Peace. Religious and sincere minds are always prepared to lay aside Errour, and to search for Truth: for if we return unto the Head and Originall of Divine Tradition, Humane Errour ceaseth; and when the Reason of the Heavenly Appointments, is once throughly discerned, whatever lay hid in Obscurity, is clear'd up, and brought to Light. As if a Pipe, that formerly conveyed a great Quantity of Water, should suddenly fail; we would then have recourse unto the Fountain, to learn the true Cause of such a Stop and Intercision, that if the same

Consuetudo sine veritate vetustas Erroris est.

Docibilem Gr. διδακτικὸν.

was

was in the Pipes, it might be repaired, and fitted to receive the Streams of Water, in the same Abundance and Purity, that they issue from the Fountain: so likewise ought all the Ministers of God, in their Observance of Divine Commands, to do: that if the Truth seems wavering and uncertain in any Point, we may have recourse unto the Originall, to wit, the Tradition of our Lord, in his Gospel, and by his Apostles: that so the Ground of our Acting may proceed thence, whence the Order and Originall of it did first arise. I have at large quoted these words out of *Cyprian*, both to shew how little the *Bishop of Rome*'s Authority was then valued; and likewise to manifest, what that Holy and Learned Man thought to be the only way, whereby all Controversies in Religion ought to be decided: not to depend upon *Uncertain Traditions*, which at the best are but the Inventions of Men; but to have Immediate recourse unto the Scriptures, and to go no further in any part of Divine Worship, than as their Rule doth guid us. And this Testimony of his, the Papists cannot in Justice refuse, since *Cyprian* is a *Saint* in their Calender, and yet died without ever retracting his Judgement.

Ad Originem Dominicam, & Evangelicam, & Apostolicam Traditionem.

3. My Third and Last Instance shall be, that notable Speech of Pope *Gregory*, about six hundred years after our Saviours time; who having had great contests for Superiority, with *John* the *Patriarch of Constantinople*; when at last, *John*, having the Emperour on his side, did endeavour to gain the Title of *Universall Bishop*, *Gregory* did fiercely oppose him in it, and in many of his Epistles, affirms that whoever should Assume that Stile, he was the *Forerunner of Antichrist*, *a Child of the Devil*, *an Apostate from the Faith*; with many other sharp, but true sayings to the same Purpose. It pleased God that within few years after, *An.* 606, Pope *Boniface*, little minding the

Greg. lib. 4. Ep. 32, 33.

Predictions

Predictions of his Predeceſſour, did not only claim, but likewiſe actually take to himſelf that Name, which, as a Badge of *Antichriſt*, and an *Infallible Mark* to know him by, he hath ever ſince tranſmitted to his Succeſſours. Now I ask, whether Pope *Gregory*, was Infallible in that Opinion of his, which he doth ſo often, and ſo earneſtly inſiſt upon? If they tell me he was, then we need not diſpute any farther, *Whether the Pope be Antichriſt*, for we have *Gregorie's* own Confeſſion, that whoever would arrogate to himſelf, the Name of *Univerſall Biſhop*, was undoubtedly ſo; but, if they ſay, he was not, then their Conceit of *Infallibility* vaniſheth, as amounting to no more than this, that the Pope is *Infallible*, when he Speaks and Acts, for the Advantage of his See; but very *Fallible* when he ſpeaks any thing, though never ſo deliberately, which in after Ages may make againſt it.

I have forebore to Urge, that many of the *Popes* have actually fallen into *Hereſie*, as *Honorius*, by Name, who by the ſixth *Synod*, was condemned for an Heretick, and his Epiſtles commanded to be burnt; and the very expreſs words of ſome of their Canons are, *That the Pope cannot be judged by any, unleſs he be found to have erred from the Faith*; which doth ſuppoſe, even in the Judgement of his own Canoniſts, that there is a Poſſibility of his Erring. Neither do I inſiſt upon the Decrees of the Councels of *Baſil* and *Conſtance*, which were both aſſembled, for the depoſing of two Popes that were unduely Choſen; and in them it was Enacted, that *A Councell was above the Pope*, which they ſtrictly command all to believe as an *Article of Faith*: Which Inſtances, though they ſtrike ſufficiently at the Pope's *Infallibility*, and *Paramount Authority*, yet becauſe the Anſwer of ſome of the moſt Moderate and Ingenuous Papiſts, is, that *Though the*

Pope be not Infallible in himself, yet in and with a Councell, he is. I ſhall therefore ſpeak a little to this Conceit; and then conclude.

I demand therefore of thoſe, who maintain the *Infallibility of the Pope, and a Councell conjunctim*; what Divine Warrant have they for ſuch an Opinion? and where hath God promiſed Infallible Aſſiſtance, unto a *Councell* of the Pope's Calling? For thoſe Texts, that are commonly made uſe of, as *Hear the Church*; and, *The Spirit ſhall lead you into all Truth*; and, *It ſeemed good unto the Holy Ghoſt, and to us*; with ſome few others to the ſame ſenſe, are as impertinently alleadged in behalf of a *Councell*, as thoſe fore-mentioned, are in behalf of the *Pope*. For

Mat. 18. 1. That Command, *Tell the Church*, doth not ſignifie an Appeal unto a Synod of Biſhops, (who are all of the Pope's Creation, and therefore muſt needs be Partiall for him) but *Church* there ſignifies, that *particular Congregation*, to which we relate as Members; neither do our Saviour's words concern *Articles of Faith*, and Matters of Opinion, but meerly *Civil Injuries*, as is plain from the Context; for our Saviour having commanded them *to forgive one another*, he then goes on to tell them, what courſe they ſhould take, in caſe a Brother ſhould offend them; firſt, *to reprove him privately*; and if that prevailed not, then *to take two or three*, as witneſſes of their proceedings: But if notwithſtanding this, the Injurious Perſon ſtill continued Obſtinate, then to tell it *Cætui*, or *to the Congregation*; as the Apoſtle *Paul* adviſeth the *Corinthians*, that *being all met together, they ſhould proceed to cenſure*; and to *Timothy*, *Them that ſin, rebuke before all*, i. e. all of that Church, or Congregation, to which they belong, *that others alſo may fear*. And this ſenſe, beſides

1 Cor. 5.

1 Tim. 5. 20.

that

that it is the proper meaning of the word Ἐκκλησία, *or Church*, (which often in Scripture signifies the *Congregation*, distinct from their *Officers*; but never the contrary) it likewise fully agrees with our Saviours Scope, who, as the Offence ariseth, would have the Remedy to arise proportionably, and therefore he useth this Gradation, that first *one* should reprove an Offending Brother, then *two or three*, then the *Church, or more*; according to what we find practised in the Church of *Corinth*, who it seems had agreed to censure the *Incestuous Person*, according as the Apostle had commanded them, and therefore he tells them, *Sufficient to such a one is the Reprehension by many*, i. e. even by all the Members of that *Christian Assembly*, to which he did relate; and if the Offender would not hearken to them, then he was to be thrown out of Communion, and to be accounted as a Stranger to the *Church*; even as an *Heathen, and a Publican*. And such Determinations of every particular Church, our Saviour saith, should be ratified in Heaven; *For*, saith he, *where two or three* (not Bishops, but Believers) *are gathered together in my Name, there I will be in the midst of them*: i. e. When any Number of Believers, how small soever, though but *two or three*, are met for those Holy Ends of Discipline, and in those Ways, which I by my Commands have warranted, I will be with them to Assist and to Guide their Councels, and to Execute their Sentence. Accordingly we find in *Tertullian's Apology*, that in all Christian Meetings upon the Lords-day, together with *Prayer* and *Preaching*, there was likewise *Censura Divina*; i. e. the *Sentence of Excommunication*, pronounced against all refractory and stubborn Sinners: according to this, our Saviours Institution.

2 Cor. 2. 9.

Chap. 49.

If any object, that *if Christ will be with two or three,*

then in all probabily he will be with a Councell of many Hundreds, much more. I answer, No doubt he will, *if they meet in his Name* i. e. according to his Command and Institution; for it is not the Assembly, though, of never so many Thousands, but the End and Manner of Assembling, which hath the Promise of Assistance. And when I can see such a *Councell*, which professeth solely to follow Scripture, according to that sense which (not the fancy of men, whether *Fathers* or *Councells*, but) the *Spirit of God* enlightning their understandings, doth give unto it; I shall then with all Reverence embrace their *Decrees*. For I know that such a *Councell cannot Erre*, because they will Command nothing, but what is already commanded by God; which every true Christian ought to obey, without the Sanction of any other Authority. But such a *Councell* as this, I am hopelesse of ever seeing under the *Papacy*; since all their meetings, for some hundreds of Yeares, have been designed, not to *search* but, to *smother* Scripture; and to Empriſon that *Light*, which if looked into, would detect and manifest their Errors. So that they come together, not in *Christs* but in the *Pope's name*; or rather *in the name of that God of the world, who is Prince of the Power of Darknesse*; and whose *Kingdome* is founded and upheld by the Artifice and cunning of their Teachers, and by the Ignorance and *Implicite Faith* of their Hearers. *Fallere & Falli To deceive and to be deceived*, is the best Motto which can be set upon all the Church-doores in the Papall Territories; but *Heaven* is a place of *Light*, and the True Church is full of Knowledge, because *they are all taught of God*, not to obey or to Believe in men, but in him alone.

2. That

2. That Promiſe of our Saviour, *I will ſend the Spirit, which ſhall lead you into all Truth*, was ſpoken Perſonally to the Apoſtles: And thoſe words, *It ſeemeth good to the Holy Spirit and to Us*, were ſpoken by them, after the accompliſhment of that Promiſe; ſo that without great preſumption, they cannot be wreſted to any other; nor ſuch wreſting, without great vanity, be confuted: ſince barely to deny ungrounded ſuppoſitions, is a ſufficient Confutation. Joh. 14. & c. 16. Act. 15.

If any aske me, ſince *neither the Pope nor a Counſell is Infallible*, as having no peculiar Promiſe for that purpoſe, then *how ſhall the Church determine Controverſies*, or, *How ſhall Hereſies be ſuppreſſed?* I anſwer, that if the word of God is clear, and the *Hereſie* be Notorious; than every Particular Church hath Power within it ſelf, to *excommunicate* all obſtinate Heretickes. But, where the Scripture, is either Dubious or Silent, there charitably to beare with diſſenters, and to wait till *God ſhall reveale it to them*, is the beſt way to winne them. And this was the onely method, which the primitive Chriſtians did take for three hundred yeares together, to preſerve and maintaine the Truth of our Religion. *Having no Communion* with ſuch, as hold manifeſt and deſtructive Errors; and in things of leſſer moment, *Forbearing one another in Love*; Theſe will at laſt be found to be the ſafe *wayes of God*; whereas to pretend to *Infallibility in determining*, or to practiſe *Tyranny* in *Impoſing*, theſe are onely the wayes of Ambitious and ſelf-ſeeking men, found out not ſo much to promote Truth (which ſtands not in need of ſuch Arts) as to Augment a party; which makes all *Articles of Faith*, to be meerly like the *Civill Lawes* of a Land, where moſt Voices doe carry the Cauſe. Such a kind of *Univerſality* as this, True Phil. 3. 15.

Piety never had, and therefore we need not be sorry, that *Popery* doth make its boast of it.

And thus I have, with as much Brevity and Plainnesse, as the subject would beare, enquired into the Grounds, whereupon the *Popes Infallibility* is said to be grounded, and after the most Impartiall search, can pronounce of them all *Mene Tekell* that being *weighed in the Balance of the Sanctuary, they are found too light.* Neither have I diverted my self, in confuting their *worship of Images*, their Blasphemous Figment *of Transsubstantiation*, their mingling of *works* in *Justification*, their *Invocation of Angells*, which the Apostle saith, *is not to hold the Head*, i. e. *to Erre fundamentally.* Their *forbidding of Marriage and commanding to abstain from meats.* Which he who propheſied of them, calls the *Doctrine of Devills.* I have omitted likwise their Furious and Bloody Tenets of Persecuting and Killing all, *who doe not worship the Image of that Beast* which they have erected; for these things, how plainely soever the Scripture speakes against them, will not much concerne them to answer, as long as they are fenced about with the *Doctrine of Infallibility*; whereby they are privileged to put what sense upon Scripture they please: but if the Christian Reader finds that conceit to be clearly disproved, then I hope he will make use of the other Arguments, to satisfie himself, that we have but too much reason to suspect the *Pope to be that Antichrist, that* Ἄνομος or *Lawlesse one, who sits in the Temple of God, and declares that he is God:* For *in the Church*, which is the *Temple* or *House of God*; for any man to make Lawes, which doe oblige the Conscience; For a *sinfull* man to stile himself *the Head and Bridegroome of the Church*, and above all, to affirme that he is *Infallible*, this

Col. 2. 19.

1 Tim. 4. 1.

Rev. 13. 15.

this is nothing elſe but to ſay that he is *God*; and therein to fulfill the moſt clear Prediction that can be, concerning *The Man of ſin*; whoſe way of Riſing was to be, by the *Deceiveableneſſe of Unrighteouſneſſe*, and his Dominion to be Eſtabliſhed by *Miracles and Lying Wonders*; Which no Church in the world doth more confidently boaſt of than the *Roman*. And therefore till her unhappy and much miſtaken Followers have cleared, that She is not *Antichriſtian*, we have little reaſon to believe that She is a *True Church*; much leſſe, to think that She is *Infallible*.

FINIS.